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Commonweal

Britain and Europe:

The Lesson of Skybolt

RONALD STEEL

Tight Little Island

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The Innocence of John Updike

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New Look in Paris

ABRAHAM ROTHBERG

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A Timely Magazine

It is the express aim of The Commonweal to provide its readers with relevant and thoughtful editorials, articles and reviews probing the burning issues of our time. As a journal of opinion edited by Catholic laymen, The Commonweal plays an important role in American publishing—presenting, with striking frequency, viewpoints and articles which many find to be unique and significant.

Accordingly, nothing could be more relevant than the prominent role The Commonweal played in the recent nation-wide discussion of the Supreme Court's prayer decision. Likewise, during the preliminaries for the Vatican Council, it was highly fitting that this journal should publish a searching series of articles on the role of the layman in the Church. These matters are squarely in the province of The Commonweal's long tradition—a tradition dating back thirty-eight years.

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THE COMMONWEAL

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

'he Spirit of Nationalism

S ONE sensitive to the twists and turns of history,)hn F. Kennedy must find his present position)mething of a mystery. In the aftermath of the 'uban crisis he was hailed for his decisive action ıd his cool display of leadership. More than that, was said that his strong words and strong actions ıally established him as the natural leader of the 'estern alliance. What had for years been missing that alliance—American leadership commensurate ith its military and political power—would now be ıpplied.

It has not turned out that way. Whatever Mr. ennedy may have gained in stature by his Cuban :tion has been effectively nullified by President harles de Gaulle of France. It is Mr. de Gaulle ıd not Mr. Kennedy who is calling the tune for .e Western alliance. Unhappily, however, Presi- :nt de Gaulle is shaping events without providing adership. For there can now be no doubt that he)sitively opposes the present structure of Western)wer and is intent, at whatever the cost, to change

What is at stake in this turn of events? In the 'es of Mr. Kennedy, the issue of Western leader- ip appears a secondary one. More important is the)cessity of maintaining a firm and viable relation- ip among all those free nations which are together reatened by Communism. In his view, the West nnot afford a divided alliance, sapped from within bickering and totally different national goals. ıd the only kind of alliance which makes any nse, he believes, is one which takes in the Conti- :ntal powers, the English and the Americans. Be- w the surface, of course, are some other consid- ations, ones which bear only peripherally on the ıestion of Communism. Most notably, Mr. Ken- dy is well aware that a change in the present 'estern power structure could have some serious ıplications for American commerce; thus his sup- port of British membership in the Common Market does not lack some plain old American self-interest.

There is little in Mr. Kennedy's analysis of the situation which we would reject. A solid Western alliance is essential in the confrontation with Communism. Moreover, it is to our legitimate self-interest to be wary of any change in the alliance which would tend to exclude the United States from the Western European market. And it is difficult to see what practical good President de Gaulle's course can bring about for any of the Western nations.

YET however valid Mr. Kennedy's thinking, it fails to touch on the most vital issue of all. For the course that President de Gaulle has chosen is simply a modernized version of that destructive nationalism which has been the historical source of most of the wars and disputes which litter the European past. The fact that Mr. de Gaulle has no imperialistic ambitions, that he does not conceive of French "grandeur" in terms of conquest, does not essentially alter the destructiveness of his course. Imperialism is only an offshoot of the nationalistic spirit. At its heart is a belief that national self-interest and national destiny are more vital than the common good of all nations. Once that spirit gains sway—if history tells us anything—even the best intentions conceivable are often insufficient to forestall evil consequences.

At first glance, it might seem unfair to tax President de Gaulle with the burden of classical nationalism. After all, he has emphasized his desire not only for a rebirth of French glory but also for a rebirth of European glory. And surely some credit is due him for re-establishing a friendly relationship between France and Germany in the face of their historical enmity. Nor can one fail to sympathize with his desire not to see his country swallowed up by the Atlantic alliance; or his opposition to a Europe smothered by the great powers of Russia and the United States.

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For all that, President de Gaulle has chosen the wrong course. The way of glory for the modern free nation is that of a common dedication to the good of all nations. It is the way of solidarity, of cooperation, of the shaping of mutually beneficial goals. If the Western nations have learned anything in the years since the end of World War II, they should at least have learned that no nation can hope to remain free if it insists on charting its own course independently of the needs and desires of other nations. This holds true preeminently of the European and Anglo-Saxon nations: like it or not, all these nations are dependent upon one another.

Their mutual dependence goes far beyond their need for solidarity against a common enemy. They are dependent upon one another for cultural enrichment, for economic stability and for the support of important human values. France cannot do without America and Great Britain anymore than they can do without her.

Latter-Day Serfs

IN VIEW of the tenuous public interest in their plight and the current lack of drive behind constructive legislation in Washington, the hopes of the nation's migratory farm workers and their families continue to be distinctly limited. They are the three million Americans at the bottom of the economic heap. Much of the time they are underemployed. At many places of work their housing is unsanitary and unfit; their children are normally deprived of basic schooling. Senator Harrison Williams says they live "under conditions that no citizen would tolerate if he knew they existed."

There are two main approaches to this chronic problem, which is nothing short of a national disgrace. The first is negative: to abrogate the law under which Mexican *braceros* are imported into this country on the grounds that domestic farm workers are too few or unwilling to do "stoop labor." Actually the growers could find sufficient workers at home if they paid adequate wages. Because of its depressing effect on going wages and working-living conditions, Public Law 78 should be discontinued when it comes up for renewal again this year.

At the same time and in conjunction with this action, Congress should adopt the positive program which Senator Williams and his subcommittee have developed and now formally proposed. It includes better housing and sanitary facilities for these exploited workers, greater educational facilities, revised child labor laws, minimum wages and National Labor Relations Board coverage. Washington would support the contemplated new state educa-

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ɔnal facilities for the first two years and share the ɔsts with the states the next three.

The Senate supported the setting up of a National dvisory Council and other migrant labor legisla- ɔn in the Eighty-seventh Congress only to be ıwarted by the House. Although financially it is : modest proportions, the enactment of such a pro- ·am requires strong friends of the farm workers in ɔth bodies backed by greatly intensified public ɛmand. The matter is important enough to call for ·essure from the White House.

.n Ominous Treaty

VENTS in the West during these past few weeks ıve tended to obscure the very important areas conflict around Southeast Asia. However, an an- ɔuncement made by Pakistan and Communist hina that they have agreed to sign a boundary ɛaty "as soon as possible" may serve to bring these eas back into world focus.

No one can blame the Pakistanis for their latest tempt to forestall serious trouble with Communist ıina during that country's continuing struggle ith India. It is simply a measure of Pakistan's ıstration over her failure so far to reach a settle- ɛnt with India over Kashmir. Yet it remains true at Pakistan has more to gain in settling with India an she does in a treaty with Communist China. fact, such a treaty can only be provisional while e Kashmir dispute remains unsolved.

Pakistan borders six countries—Communist China, e Soviet Union, India, Iran, Afghanistan and Bur- ɑ. There cannot be another country so beset by di- rse political complexes. Each one of the six coun- es represents a different determination for South- st Asia. Yet in a real sense India is the key to the ture direction of that part of the world. One can ly hope that India will take the signal from Pakis- ɑ's latest overture to Communist China and seek ıway to re-establish an *entente cordiale* with Pakis- ɑ, her ancient and troubled sister-country.

anada's Option

EPORTS of a major debate in Canada over the sirability of nuclear arms for that country bring e spectacle of multiplying independent nuclear wers into uncomfortably close view. Thankfully, e debate is still open. Unlike France, Canada has t yet set herself upon the road to becoming a clear power in her own right. But there is a defi- ɛe possibility that she may. This, next to reports ɑt offer a renewed hope for a nuclear test-ban agreement between the United States and Russia, stirs up the most contradictory feelings.

One interesting development in Canada's nuclear debate is Liberal Party leader Lester B. Pearson's advocacy of nuclear weapons, a clean reversal of former Liberal policy. Despite reports of Mr. Pearson's "irrevocable commitment" to his present views, however, he said that a future Liberal government would explore with its allies the desirability of Canada's concentrating on conventional forces in its present NATO and North American Radar Defense System roles. Where there is such hesitancy to commit Canada finally to nuclear power, there is still hope that she will not be so committed.

Mr. Pearson's advocacy for Canada as a nuclear power has been curious in other respects also. His major argument seems to be that Canada was pledged by Prime Minister Diefenbaker's government (against Mr. Pearson's original opposition) to play a nuclear role in NATO and NORAD and that, therefore, she should live up to that pledge without delay. In other words, Mr. Pearson advocates a policy as a member of the opposition, which as the head of the government he would not support.

The argument, such as it is, is not very convincing anyway. No party in power is absolutely bound to make good on previously-made commitments which it sees as presently disadvantageous to the country or to the alliance in question. Yet aside from this, there does not seem to be any good reason for Canada now to undertake the hazardous and prohibitively costly road to nuclear independence.

Most puzzling, however, were the implications of a resolution brought before Mr. Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservative party's conference last week. Up to now, Mr. Diefenbaker has been firmly opposed to nuclear weapons for Canadian troops. Yet the resolution presented to his party, with powerful backing from all over the country, declared that Canada should accept nuclear weapons if international disarmament can not be achieved this year. At the Prime Minister's request the resolution was not voted on.

It is very doubtful indeed that the world will achieve general and complete disarmament this year. But owing partly to the Soviet Union's concessions on on-site inspections, it is very possible that a nuclear test-ban can be achieved. Assuming such a test-ban, does that mean that those who offered the resolution will still be committed to nuclear independence for Canada? The same question can, of course, be raised about France, which is already committed. But, while the debate is open, there is still time for our neighbor to the North to consider the terrible contradictions inherent in such a commitment.

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Religion and Race

TO BORROW a famous line, I have just seen the future, and it works. From January 14 to 17 I participated in the National Conference on Religion and Race, held in Chicago as a religious commemoration of the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation. Like most of the participants, I think, I had the feeling throughout that we were collaborating in the making of history.

The Conference was convened by the respective social action departments of the National Council of Churches, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, and the Synagogue Council of America. Chairman of the Conference was the Reverend Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, president of Morehouse College; vice-chairmen were Bishop Germanos of Synadon of the Greek Orthodox Church, Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, Rabbi Ferdinand M. Isserman of St. Louis' Temple Israel and Bishop R. Julian Smith of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Attending were about eight hundred delegates, representing more than seventy religious groups and denominations.

It is hard to believe, but this was the first national meeting convened jointly by all the major faith groups in the United States. While recognizing their differences, each of the churches sees racial segregation as one of the most crucial problems facing our nation, and each sees the problems of prejudice and discrimination as being at their roots moral problems. It was to get at these roots that the delegates gathered in Chicago.

To aid in this work, the Conference heard many distinguished speakers—too many for me even to list them all. All I can do here is give a few quotes to give some idea of the flavor of the affair. Cardinal Meyer of Chicago, referring to the Emancipation as "the nation's unfinished business," remarked sadly that God Himself must wonder that we can launch astronauts into outer space yet remain unable "to banish prejudice and gross ignorance and cruel racial injustice from our communities." Mr. Irwin Miller, first lay president of the National Council of Churches, warned: "It is very clear that this nation cannot continue to preach to the whole world—with a certain smug self-righteousness—the brotherhood of man and equal opportunity to every citizen in a free society, and at the same time continue to deny the fruits of that brotherhood. . . ." And Rabbi Julius Mark, president of the Synagogue Council of America, emphasized "the urgent necessity of translating into daily practice the noble concepts of human equality."

Whether these sound like clichés in print or not, I do not know; I can assure you that this conference was not one of clichés and pious platitudes. Its spirit, I think, was captured by the Rabbi Abraham Josh Heschel when he said: "Let us dodge no issues; let yield no inch to bigotry. . . . To think of man in tern of white and black is more than an error. It is an ey disease, a cancer of the soul." That is the way all th delegates saw it, and they were united in their dete mination to cut the cancer out.

To this end, it was arranged that the machinery the National Conference will be kept in being ar that similar efforts will be carried out to break dow racial barriers on the local level, beginning with t "target cities": Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, New Orlear Oakland, San Francisco, St. Louis, San Antonio, Seatt and Pittsburgh. To assist in this work, a permanent i terreligious steering committee was set up to coordina joint programs in race relations in the American re gious community.

For many Christians at the Conference, Protesta historian Franklin H. Littell stated the problem su cinctly: "Racialism, which is the foremost issue co fronting the churches, has precisely the same relati to our church life as polygamy in Africa or the bric price in Africa and Asia. That is, it is a typical case the carrying over into the Church of prebaptism practices which are contradictory to Christian norm Dr. Littell's plea for a tightening of church discipli on this and other matters found many sympathe hearers at the conference.

I left Chicago with no doubts about the determi tion of the delegates to follow up on the Conferenc Appeal to Conscience (see page 518). If there was a ironic note about the proceedings, it was only in t fact that this should have been the first national int religious effort to meet any of our pressing probler This, I think, was a common feeling—indeed, ma delegates suffered from a certain ambivalence of pu pose, torn between dealing with the specific probl of the Conference, the race question, and with enteri into a religious dialogue with those from other religic communities.

For me, too, the ecumenical aspect of the meetir was very moving. Everyone knows that in many pa of the country it is extremely difficult to get a prie minister and rabbi on the same platform. Yet on t very first night in Chicago I saw a Catholic Cardin a Jewish rabbi and a Protestant churchman take tu in leading us in prayer, and the experience was, in t true sense of the word, edifying. I see no reason w the experience should not be duplicated on the lo level around the country, and heaven knows that would be hard to find a more urgent matter of comm concern than the race question. JAMES O'GA

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Britain and Europe:

The Lesson of Skybolt

RONALD STEEL

'HE COURSE of the Atlantic alliance, like true love, e'er did run smooth. But it has reached a new peak of ırbulence in the wake of the Skybolt missile flap. While bandonment of the costly Skybolt project may have een the very model of economic wisdom, it has pro-ɔundly shaken Britain's relationship toward America. hings are unlikely ever to be quite the same again.

With Skybolt scuttled, the British suddenly found ıemselves with only a wilted fig leaf to wear to the ıeetings of the nuclear club. Their aging V-bombers re fast being outdated and they have no missile project f their own to replace them. The bomber-launched kybolt missiles, with their thousand-mile range, were ıpposed to allow Britain to hobble along with its ɔmbers until 1970. It was a marvelous plan, but it .cked one essential ingredient: certitude. The British ere simply riding piggy-back on a U.S.-financed proj-ɔt. When the driver decided he had gone far enough, ıe hitchhiker had no place to go.

With this in mind, the outraged cries of "betrayal" om Britain's right-wing press make inflammatory read-ıg, but not very much sense. Skybolt was a gamble om the start; the Macmillan government knew it, and decided to take a chance because it offered the best ɔpe of remaining a nuclear power without really pay-ıg for it. All that has now gone by the boards.

Like nothing else since the fiasco of Suez, the Sky-ɔlt affair has driven home to the British the full ex-ɜnt of their military dependence upon the United ɜates. It is mostly on American sufferance that Britain ıs been able to keep up the pretense of nuclear in-ɜpendence. And the United States has been willing pay for that pretense because the British nuclear ɔrce isn't independent at all. Rather, it is an integrated though not particularly welcome—part of America's rategic forces.

The Kennedy-Macmillan meeting at Nassau promises ormy days ahead for the Atlantic alliance. Adminis-ation spokesmen have described it as a compromise, ıt capitulation would be a better word. Hat in hand, Macmillan went to the Bahamas to save Britain's independent nuclear striking force. He wanted a U.S. decision to stick with Skybolt, but the Administration had no intention of sinking more money into what it considered a superfluous weapon. At the same time, it saw in Skybolt the means of persuading the British that there is no room in NATO for two nuclear powers.

Crow was on the menu at Nassau, and the American offer to let Britain buy U.S.-made Polaris missiles was little more than a face-saving device to ease the effects of a tactless ultimatum. Rather than insuring British nuclear independence, the Nassau "compromise" was a sieve of loopholes and contradictions. First, since Britain has no nuclear submarines, she will have to build them. This will take at least five years, and so the Polaris question won't even become practical until the late 1960's—by which time technology will have no doubt rendered them obsolete. Second, the British will still be totally dependent upon American good will for their nuclear capacity. Polaris is simply Skybolt writ large. Third, just how "independent" Britain's submarine force (assuming she actually decides to build it) will be is open to question. The reason for this is that Kennedy demanded, and Macmillan accepted, that the British force be assigned to NATO. Since NATO promises to have an American commander for a long time to come, this is a bit like assigning the British fleet to Norfolk. The Nassau meeting only smoothed over the choppy waters of Atlantic discord. The real decisions have yet to be made.

THE ABANDONMENT of Skybolt caught the British with their guard down, for they had been banking their whole nuclear program on the hope that the Americans would see the missile program through. At the Paris conference of NATO ministers which followed a few days later, a chastened British delegation turned a deaf ear to the Pentagon's plan for an increase in Europe's conventional forces. Smarting from his Skybolt wounds, defense minister Peter Thorneycroft came out in favor of strictly limited land forces in Europe, to be backed up by a powerful nuclear deterrent. This went against the whole McNamara thesis that the Europeans should

NALD STEEL, an American writer and editor who comments political and cultural affairs for this and other journals, re-ntly returned to the United States from Europe.

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build up their troop commitments and rely on the U.S. to furnish the nuclear weapons.

To many Europeans the Pentagon plan seems designed to perpetuate an American atomic monopoly within the Atlantic alliance. And the "nuclear pause" during which the Americans and the Russians would engage in various gradations of conflict before calling in the H-bombs, seemed the formula for the annihilation of Western Europe. The end of the conference saw a pious resolution for an increase in European conventional forces, but in the face of Continental apathy and British recalcitrance, it was little more than window-dressing which involved no promise to actually perform anything.

Viewed from the perspective of the Skybolt imbroglio, Macmillan's mid-December talks with de Gaulle at Rambouillet are unusually significant. They may yet hold the key to Britain's place in the future of Europe. The timing could not have been more in de Gaulle's favor. Basking in the glow of his electoral triumph, his much-abused policy of nuclear independence for France now seemed vindicated by the Skybolt lesson. All along he has said that no nation could depend for its defense on the good graces of another; that the Americans could not be expected to put their allies' defense needs above their own; and that France could not hope to be master of her diplomacy until she was master of her defense, which must include nuclear arms. The French had built their own nuclear force from the ground up, without American help and over American opposition. Whatever its inadequacies, it is a force geared to the defense of France and not dependent upon decisions made in the Pentagon.

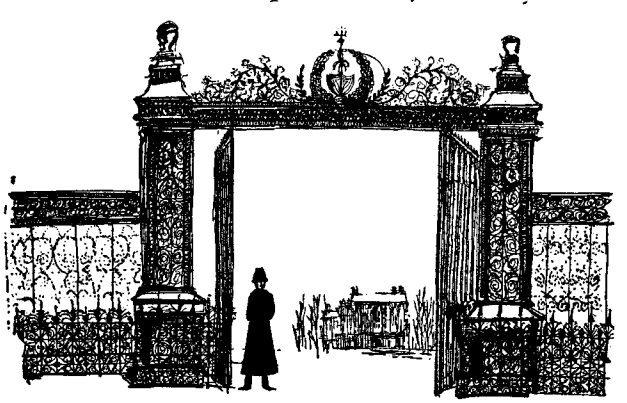
We cannot be certain what was said at Rambouillet, but the Skybolt lesson—coupled with the approaching end of the Adenauer era in Germany—may be leading de Gaulle to seek a new ally in the grand design he has mapped out for a new European diplomacy. This diplomacy, with its hints of a powerful Europe seeking direct negotiation with the Russians over the eventual reunification of the Continent, hinges on the creation of a powerful European defense force independent of, though perhaps allied with, the United States. The question facing Britain appears to be whether she is now ready to cast her lot with Europe, both economically and politically, or whether she will try to maintain her "special relationship" with America.

THE STALLED negotiations at Brussels over Britain's entrance into the Common Market really involve political rather than economic decisions. The endless arguments over agricultural policy and Commonwealth preference, while real enough, only mask the deeper question of whether Britain is ready wholeheartedly to commit herself to Europe. Unless she is willing to make that commitment, even Britain's warmest friends cannot help her, because the European community is abov all a political idea.

Economics is the means and not the end of Europea union. What de Gaulle will never permit—and in thi he has the solid support of the Six—is for Britain to pu one foot in Europe and leave the other dangling in th muddy waters of a mystical "Atlantic union." Shoul Macmillan indefinitely try to play the double game, th door will, however reluctantly, slam tight at Brussel French-sponsored hints of a revived "free trade area for Britain and the other European outsiders have bee designed to show the British that if they come in the have to come in all the way—or else stay on the outsid and work out whatever economic deal they can wit the Six. And outside the Common Market, Britain ca have no voice in the political construction and orienta tion of a united Western Europe.

The magnitude of Britain's problem has finally falle into focus: it is not a choice between Europe and th Commonwealth—that choice was made long ago in favo of Europe—but between Europe and America. Britain quest for nuclear independence has rested on her mil tary cooperation with the United States. This, in turn has furnished the justification for her detachment fron Europe and her desire to play the role of middlema in the Atlantic alliance. But if Britain can no longe pay the costs of nuclear independence, and if she can not count on the United States to pay those costs fo her—as Skybolt demonstrated—how meaningful is he nuclear independence? And just what does Britain ge out of integrating her nuclear force with the massiv American arsenal? An integration which Secretary Mc Namara conceded is so complete that the British forc can hardly be invoked separately—and is a virtually ir relevant increment to American nuclear power.

Between Rambouillet and Nassau, Macmillan migh well have wondered where Britain's nuclear policy ha taken her. De Gaulle's opposition to the Americans ha brought France a small, costly, and still-uncomplete nuclear force—but one totally responsive to Frenc direction. Britain's policy of cooperation, on the othe hand, has brought her a small, costly, and outmode nuclear force that is independent only in theory.



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The attempt at nuclear independence has not taken Britain very far. As long as she is dependent on America for her atomic capacity, she will be subject to more Skybolts and the growing realization that all her expenditures for nuclear weapons aren't buying her anything except a small addition to the American arsenal, which the Americans neither want nor need. All by herself, Britain will be very hard pressed indeed to mount any convincing kind of deterrent. Bombs are easy to make, but the means of delivering them are grossly expensive, and become even more so with every advance in technology.

THERE ARE no easy answers to Britain's nuclear dilemma, for they all involve fundamental decisions on Britain's place between America and Europe. To cut herself loose from America and still remain outside Europe is the easiest alternative to dispose of: it offers Britain the worst of both worlds and would make any attempt at nuclear independence virtually impossible. Britain could try to retain her ambiguous relationship with America, one based on picking up America's nuclear scraps where she could find them. More Skybolts, to be precise. While this might give Britain the illusion of nuclear independence, even though denying her the substance, it would mean her exclusion from the European community and from any influence over the course of European diplomacy. "Atlantic union" is, in effect, only the last refuge of "little Englandism."

Or, with a prayer and a program, Britain might take the plunge into Europe, joining the Common Market and accepting all the political consequences it entails. This means Britain would have to cut her atomic strings to America, but it can hardly be said that the Americans ever encouraged Britain's attempt at nuclear self-sufficiency. It would be fairer to say that we have endured it.

Once in Europe, Britain would be able to influence the political orientation of the European community, and perhaps guide it along lines that need not be inimical to American policy. President Kennedy recognizes this as well as anyone, which is a major reason for his encouragement of British entry into the Common Market. But once Britain was in Europe she would have to turn her back forever on the idea of being a bridge between America and Europe, putting a North American finger into the European pie. "Atlantic union" was always meant to be a substitute for a united, independent Europe—not an instrument of it. Once Europe is created politically, it too will have to go by the boards for the Europeans aren't going to all the agony of building a community so that it can be manipulated by the Americans.

If Britain finally does go into Europe, she will have to do so with her V-bombers flying a European flag. There is no place in Europe for two independent atomic forces, least of all two small ones. Once Britain pools her economy with her Continental neighbors, it can only be a matter of time before she pools her nuclear force as well. Since the community as such does not have an arsenal of its own, this can only mean that Britain and France, as Europe's only nuclear powers, must ultimately join forces in the creation of a European nuclear deterrent, to be exercised by them in the name of the community. And with a defense force worthy of the name, the community will then be in a position to implement a diplomacy it deems most relevant to its interests.

The lines of that diplomacy are far from clear; the Europeans themselves are not agreed on what course it will take. Perhaps it will mean a new kind of Atlantic alliance resting on two equal weights: America and Europe. Or perhaps it will lead to a European "third force" seeking to remove itself from the American-Soviet power struggle. But no European diplomacy is possible without a European defense force. And the seeds of that force lie in a pooling of the French and British deterrents into a unified force.

Thus de Gaulle, if he wants to build Europe as a powerful independent force, must logically turn to Britain for support. He can do without her, but he would do even better with her. Whatever the merits of present speculation about the Paris-Bonn axis, little of it will hold any water with the scheduled departure of Chancellor Adenauer next year. His successors cannot be counted on to accept French hegemony in the community. Ultimately, it is Britain which can best play the role of France's partner, and it is a Paris-London axis on which Europe's nuclear deterrent seems to rest.

Orpheus

And suddenly and without hope
you strike a chord in deeper zones:
lord of the quintessential globe!
master and monster of the sounds!

Yes and the gut shapes many a sigh
and Daphne turns suggestively
against a false and gummy sky
half-lingering in a laurel tree

amazed. Transform! transfuse! The god
dissembles who was wiser once
digesting the abridged dad, runs

to cardboard faces now, and odd
—has lost the secret of the heart:
the flesh and blood that dying START!

ROBERT CLAYTON CASTO

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Tight Little Island

DESMOND O'GRADY

IN MALTA, every now and then one comes across signs which shout "British Get Out!" put up by sympathizers of the local Labor Party. But there is a feeling abroad that if it were not already too late, many Maltese would ask the Labor Party's supporters to withdraw those posters. The dismissals from the dockyards and the announcement that the military establishment is to be reduced sharply in the next five years have stunned the Maltese. They thought that the English would never go, but now they can see it happening. The strain this withdrawal imposes on the economy is evident everywhere, from the shopkeepers in Valletta, who report a fifty per cent drop in takings, to the supermarket in Pawla, a service-wives district where there are not more than ten people in the stores at any one time, even on a Saturday morning.

One has to visit Malta to realize how small and poor it is. It takes barely thirty-five minutes by car to cross the island from the capital, Valletta. With Gozo and the smaller islands, the total area is only one hundred twenty-two square miles, yet there are three hundred and thirty thousand Maltese who increase by eight thousand yearly.

In the center of Valletta the foundations of an old building are being removed to make way for a parking lot. In the sides of the limestone walls, runnels and conduits constructed four centuries ago by the Knights of Malta are revealed by the excavation. The Knights, preparing for a Turkish siege, fitted each great building with its own well, for they were aware how precious rainwater is on islands where it falls only two months out of the year. The problem has not changed in four hundred years, for recently a delegation left for Israel to investigate Israeli methods of overcoming similar difficulties.

The uniformity of the landscape near Valletta is striking: fields, villages and churches are of the same yellow-brown color, and it takes some seconds for the fact to register that an essential color is missing: green. Not only is rain scarce, there is not even a rich soil. Much of it, in fact, was imported as ballast in ships by the Knights, who recognized that while the rock would make an excellent fortress, it was most heartbreaking to farm.

Malta has in fact always been an excellent fortress, but it has lost its strategic importance. Now it cannc even feed itself. Like every other depressed area, Malt boasts an ambitious development plan, but there seem to be little hope of its success. It would be difficu enough to develop Malta's industries to compete i sales against Common Market countries, even if it wer rich in resources and skills. But it lacks both resourc and men with modern know-how. On top of this, ther is little trust or respect between the different grou which should be responsible for making any new initi tives.

MALTA's fourteen thousand-strong civil service ha been accused of featherbedding by businessmen, whi businessmen's profits are taken as patent proof th they themselves are thieves. "Businessman" usual means "merchant," for importing and retailing are th major business activities. Businessmen complain th the administration shows no understanding of the problems and no ability to revitalize the island's econ my. The government, to give one example of its sir plistic solutions, has attempted to recoup the loss suffered through the reduction of the naval base b increasing import duties. But the most obvious effe of the excessive duties on cigarettes and watches, f instance, has been a growth of the black market trac in these items.

Some businessmen place their trust in an extensi of the practice whereby foodstuffs are imported ar canned on the island for eventual export to Nor Africa. They point out that they pay girls only six dc lars per week, but it remains to be seen how far th practice will develop and what success the Maltese w have against formidable competition in countries whi are already industrializing.

Malta's richest potential lies in tourist trade. T island has the Mediterranean attractions of splend sun, sky and sea, the fortifications of Valletta, preh toric temples, Caravaggio paintings, primitive conc tions on Gozo and widespread use of English. As t result of an energetic campaign, tourists have come Malta in increasing numbers, but before tourism c support the island's economy as it should, some dra backs must be overcome.

First, there must be sufficient investment to bri tourist facilities, particularly hotel accommodations, t to the best European standards. One of the top hot in Malta is memorable mainly for the pervasive sm

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of fly spray and the impression it gives that time has stood still since 1934. These antiquated hotels might at least be replaced. There are ambitious schemes for modern hotels and for the tourist development of Comino, the tiny island in the strait between Malta and Gozo. But the influence of the Catholic Church in Malta makes the full development of such projects, including one for a Casino, doubtful.

No bikinis, for instance, are allowed on Maltese beaches, and editions of English papers carrying photographs of bathing beauty contests are banned. On Gozo, which has thirty thousand inhabitants, a movie is shown only once a week. It is run by priests, and if any scenes go beyond the narrow sexual limits allowed, a hand is thrust in front of the projector, leaving the rest to the audience's imagination. English dowdiness as well as Catholic puritanism cramp Malta's tourism, but the biggest obstacle is the Church's opposition to the sort of night life tourists expect. As it is, too many returning tourists go through the following routine: Where'd you go?—Malta." "What did you do?—Nothing."

Upon such boredom and isolation, television has a dramatic effect. There are over ten thousand sets on the island, so that everyone is aware of the invidious comparisons which can be made between Malta's limitations and life elsewhere. The local station transmits canned programs four hours daily, but Italian television, which is received perfectly, is a major factor in the increased sympathy for Italy.

There is something of a cultural cold war on a higher level between those who attend the Dante Alighieri society and those who frequent the British Council, and Italy seems to be winning out. It is difficult to forge an indigenous culture of any sophistication when the market for a novel in Maltese would be about two hundred and fifty persons, and the search for a national identity is difficult on all levels. As Malta must search for a model for the future, Italy is the obvious alternative to England.

Though they may look poor, the thrifty Maltese usually have a nest-egg put aside, but once they use the last of the nest-eggs, and the future is still uncertain, anything might happen. Resentment, combined with the frustration of the more imaginative, may prove favorable ground for a demagogue who could restore the island's strategic importance by making it into another Cuba.

Already, intelligent Maltese talk of the need for a dictator who will make drastic reforms, raise production, enforce hard work and rationalize the public service. The Nationalist Party, which is in office under Borg Oliver's leadership, seems inadequate to meet the mounting crisis. But the only alternative is Mintoff's Labor Party. The talented Mr. Mintoff appeals to the nationalistic sentiments of the Maltese, and provided he does not seek revenge on his opponents, could once again give Malta the sense of purpose it so badly needs. As it is, groups stagnate in a dour atmosphere of perpetual petty criticism. During Mintoff's years in office technical education was energetically fostered, but since 1957 it has waned, and this weakness is one of the roots of Malta's troubles.

DESPITE Archbishop Gonzi's threat at the last elections, that anyone who voted Labor would be committing a mortal sin, almost thirty per cent did. If the economic situation deteriorates sufficiently, Mintoff could even obtain a majority. But if another Cuba results, Britain will be largely to blame. A country must accept responsibilities after ruling for a century. Britain has made Malta dependent on the dockyards and money grants, while she has failed to educate the Maltese in technical skills and in political responsibility.

What can the Maltese do? Many of them just leave. The rich make frequent trips to Europe, and some of them keep their money in Swiss banks. The poor migrate, some to the Common Market countries, but the majority to Australia, which has taken sixty per cent of the postwar migration. The island is thus scattered with nostalgic "Aussie Bars" and "Queensland Saloons," often run by migrants who returned to marry and found that their wives developed cold feet when it came to leaving the island. Yet for every ten Maltese at home there is one in Australia. Because of Malta's current difficulties, in fact, Australia recently doubled its quota for Maltese immigrants to three thousand a year.

The situation in Malta, if not yet desperate, is indeed worrisome. There are plenty of schemes to save the day. Indeed one hears of perhaps too many projects, such as drilling for oil, American companies taking over the dockyard, appeals to the World Bank and more promisingly, closer links with the European Economic Community.

Malta is confused, somewhat like a war hero who suddenly finds his pension withdrawn, and who, a little uncertainly, a little resentfully, looks around to see how he can support himself. He may come up with some glorious schemes, but one wonders whether he has really measured his possibilities against the problems he faces. For all that, however, one can only regard him and by extension, Malta, sympathetically.

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The Innocence of John Updike

GUERIN LA COURSE

"MEN OF GENIUS," Goethe believed, "experience puberty again and again; other people are young only once." In the work of John Updike this peculiar gift is evident. He is able to return again and again to that frontier world, to mine its rarities of feeling and painful alertness. In doing this, his writing reveals an "immense, tinted pity" teethed with the sybarite's sensitivity, the child's astonishment of awakening and the man's longing to see the light of it all.

Updike's world, pointedly autobiographical, fuses the perspectives of early and late youth with those of youngmarrieds in an adulthood somehow free from crustiness. Before all else, it is the finely calibrated registers of feeling and their power to dress life with their own ambiguous impact—the adolescent awareness—that subserves the range of his art. He sounds the Pennsylvania farm country and New England towns with a heart-fierceness that at once enthralls and frightens.

Although his published work thus far consists only of a slight volume of poetry, two collections of short stories and two novels, it would be hard to deny that Updike is carving an indelible image on American letters. His Faustian inquisitiveness leaves nothing of mid-century U.S.A. unexplored: first love-first sorrow, wife-wooing, smalltown profs and supermarkets and second-hand autos. His characters live unprotected from the sympathy and sarcasm of his eye. He speaks reservedly of his gift. "It is as if the soul is a camera shutter customarily set at 'ordinary'; but now and then, through some inadvertence, it is tripped wide open and the film is flooded with an enigmatic image."

These modest inadvertences, however, effortlessly obtain for him Chesterton's title of cosmic patriot. His prose has the elegance and precise hunger of poetry. "What is the past, after all, but a vast sheet of darkness in which a few moments, pricked apparently at random, shine?" With intense impeccability his sense registration carries the timbre and range of the Persian poets who shocked Rilke into a new kind of verse. The hypnotic metaphors he finds so natural bind image to image, sentence to sentence, in a fresh perception of the appearing world; they challenge the eye to correlate anew things shattered by the analytical mind. In this respect, Updike confesses to an "excessively pictorial" approach, hinting at his interest in drawing and painting (he spent two years at Oxford's Ruskin Schoo of Drawing).

His central themes are few and uncomplex. Under lying all of them is the persistent quest for love and it sometimes attainment. Through the immediacy of mar ried love Updike explores a young humanity in its pur suit of selfhood, a pursuit which often withdraws int childhood to retrace the secret steps. Each of hi characters pursues sincerity in a broken world bot tender and pain-ridden; his art emerges from a pas sional existence which seeks the moment-worth-per petuating-forever. In this, he makes Baudelaire's ques tion his own: "What does it matter what the reality out side me is made of, provided that it helps me to fee that I am and what I am?" And to this he counterpoise Rilke's lament: "Between even the closest human being infinite distances continue to exist." He probes into th genesis, mood and bridging of this rift. And whe mirrored in a relentless sexuality, these yield an epis temology of *eros* and *psyche*.

One's first impressions of Updike's work are thos of reverence and an undemanding love; but his scalpe turns the smallest edge of tissue, laying bare an insuper able stupidity or an unreflective lust, and hints of th troubled man in danger of a full-fledged misanthropy A persistent threat to being hides in the tyranny c time which obliterates the bondage of hearts. "There i no pity, nor, peculiarly, is there any humor," write Whitney Balliett, "but there is a great deal of martine like understanding."A triple context is discernible in h writing, pacing the periods of growth to maturity. H sketches of childhood portray consistently the belea guered innocent who suffers collision with a bitterswe reality; the riddle and pain of adolescence provide background for his most poignant artistry. But Updik forges his most agonizing and most significant songs c flesh and isolation from his own current perspective c young adulthood.

SCHOOLED in the *New Yorker* tradition, his most tel ing work thus far has been his short stories. In then with a casual leisureliness, he sketches the democrat scene. His women are obtusely, unapproachably de lectable whether knee-deep in the Caribbean, bundle in their quilted housecoats, or playing word games o a late drive home. His pubescents dress their wounds c infatuation or nascent manhood with their instinct t objectify their pain, sealing it off with the sweet dru

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of cynicism. One feels that Updike has nowhere else to go in this medium, whether in form, style or resource; he has come full term.

His novels are something else again. *The Poorhouse Fair,* in the Huxley-Orwell genre of social apocalypse, pictures one day in the lives of inmates in a New Jersey poorhouse, the day of their annual fair. Hungry for personal expression in a stereotyped atmosphere, they produce penny candy, peachstone baskets, patchwork quilts, biscuits from carefully hoarded recipes, colored lights and Sousa marches. Indocile, the aged fight feebly to resist a feckless institutionalizing without hope or belief. In a paroxysm of expectation a blind woman cries out: "Imagine a blind giant tossing rocks through eternity. At some point he would build a cathedral." Conner, the state prefect, is for inmate Hook a man who displays "not goodness but busyness." The conspiracy of the ancients mounts to an intolerable pitch, and the fair ends with the stoning of Conner and the clogging forgetfulness of age.

Rabbit, Run is Updike's portrait of tumbledown despair. Its connecting image is the membrane, connoting permeability, tenuousness and a perilous vulnerability. Rabbit walks out on his pregnant wife and the Magic-Peel kitchen utensil and a dying life to reclaim the shadow of his athletic past. He holes up with Ruth, a plain and plump but pleasant prostitute whom he instructs with his fastidious sex-style. The membrane shivers—"She feels transparent; he sees her heart." Paral fulfillment discovered anywhere cannot persuade him. Nor does his return to Janice, who in a helpless, drunk despondency allows their newborn daughter to drown in an overfilled tub. The membrane flails and flaps. Rabbit runs again, seeking whatever it is he is searching for. Updike swings an angry mallet against the "smug, chinkless, irresistible *power* of stupidity, the most powerful force on earth."

"Human love," Claudel wrote to Jacques Rivière, never has any beauty except so long as satisfaction evades it. For a writer especially, there is no worse delusion than love. It is a career where he is absolutely certain, except at the price of becoming an imbecile, to be a failure." It is here—at some scarcely discernible point—that Updike transgresses. It is here that the foil of his genius appears. Innocence is no bed-fellow for failure; it ends in fear rather than understanding.

Innocence means unacquaintedness, unfamiliarity, separation from a depth of life which ensnares, soils and instructs. Updike has yet to pass beyond the frontiers of the pleasant and unpleasant, the agreeable and disagreeable, the delightful and unsettling polarities. He must wade into the murk of genuine evil and conscious values before his art will blossom into its promised dimension. The converse of innocence is *harmfulness*—the sting of existence consciously known and embraced. And while Updike shocks or fascinates or puzzles with minor pathos, he must—if he is to become a major novelist—enter this larger sphere and assume a stance.

Of *Rabbit, Run* he has remarked, "I don't really know about the youth of today or any other day. If the book has any sociological value, that's fine, but it was not the purpose of writing it. There is a certain necessary ambiguity. I don't wish my fiction to be any clearer than life." But Updike's virtues and his innocence, as writer, are not of a piece. He betrays a timidity to surpass himself, his style, and his treasuring of the surface insight despite its promise. He fears to foray into the nightmare of feeling for the significances. The puberty of genius has a double edge.

IT IS lingering innocence that surrounds and hampers his true passion. Beyond the scalpel, the cool analytics and aloof understatement he stands paralyzed. No directive depth or height or propulsion moves him from the welter of experience into the articulation of its mentality. He relies, apparently, on language rather than thought, sense rather than sensibility, wit rather than wisdom—all of which afford only temporary harbor. The result is that Updike harvests the proximate, fragmented responses of the heart and allows them to pale for want of a larger, more embracing vision. It is his method which is at once the key to his genius and his paralysis. He endeavors to effect a unity in each carefully observed situation by a blend of elegantly honed poetry and a vague, undirected emotional coloration. There is in his works, to be sure, a pervasive seriousness, an Edenic sense of impermanence and loss. But the lasting roots of significance must be nourished by a constantly enlarging *interpretation* of one's experience. The "certain necessary ambiguity" he speaks of limps because it lacks mind or establishment. Such deeper awareness—*amid* the necessarily opaque elements of an unclear, painful world—constitutes the boundary between expert storytelling and literature, between brilliant surfaces and brilliant permanence.

This is not to intellectualize his art. The eclipse of an innocence of this kind need not involve the birth of a "philosophical" form, and Updike need not play prophet or mentor or Ann Landers for his public. "In an age," Lawrence Durrell lamented recently, "where the nature and role of the work of art are not understood, we get an overvaluation of the artist himself as a personality. He must have some sort of solution, we say, to the problems that bedevil us. Why not let us ask him?" Updike rightfully refuses to be priest or counselor.

Our expectation is that the reflective world of the man of letters must, by an intrinsic necessity, be braced and founded on a consciously chosen pursuit (if not attainment) of human values. It is this living-*conscious* nerve which ultimately enables the artist to work; which empowers him to illumine, if only by negation (as Sartre and Strindberg have done).

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"There is a color," Updike maintains, "a quiet but tireless goodness that things at rest, like a brick wall or a small stone, seem to affirm. A wordless reassurance these things are pressing to give." In his own territories of wonder, in his radiant infinity of unseen and even unborn hearts, he is lord. All these contain their promise and their challenge. Independent of fashionable trends, at work in downtown Ipswich "in a sort of slum, sufficiently Protestant about trying to work every day," Updike cannot afford to sit on his hands. He is at his midpoint of realization—a place where Gertrude Stein told Hemingway that a backward glance over his achievement would mean being caught in a whirlpool without a compass.

One hopes Updike will obey his own clarion. "To transcribe middleness with all its grits, bumps, and anonymities, in its fullness of satisfaction and mystery: is it possible or, in view of the suffering that violently colors the periphery and that at all moments threatens to move into the center, worth doing? Possibly not; but the horse-chestnut trees, the telephone poles, the porches, the green hedges recede to a calm point that in my subjective geography is still the center of the world."

New Look in Paris

ABRAHAM ROTHBERG

PARIS, always the "city of light," is now a good deal lighter and destined to become lighter still. A new five-year *nettoyage,* or cleaning, campaign has been launched by the de Gaulle government to give the city brightening, and as with so many other de Gaulle measures, it has provided a bone of contention for Frenchmen and foreigners alike. A one hundred-ten-year-old law of Napoleon III requiring that all buildings in Paris be cleaned every ten years has been reactivated, and since the law applies not only to private dwellings but to public buildings and monuments, the hot sparks of controversy have been struck.

The old saying that every man loves two cities, his own and Paris, means that natives and visitors alike have strong opinions on the new face that has been emerging since the cleaning program began this past summer. Traditionalists want Paris to remain the same, "their" old Paris, smudged, stained and grey, looking as if the Seine had watermarked her buildings, as if history had passed a grimy hand across her face. Tradition has it that this somewhat dour exterior was a delight to the eye, softened and made beautiful by the play of sunlight, the clear air, the chestnut, acacia and poplar trees—and they don't want it changed.

In spite of the traditionalist's nostalgia for the "old" Paris, there is a sure beauty in the new face of clean stone and rediscovered brick. Paris' black, wrought-iron balconies are more sharply etched than before, flower pots are brighter in the windows, red and orange awnings more striking over the eaves and cafes, and the familiar tile roofs and chimney pots more artfully outlined. The architecture of the old buildings takes on a new life, a golden glow that dims the fine worn grey of the adjacent and as yet unwashed edifices, and gives the city almost the color of pale gold flesh.

Suddenly, all kinds of old decorations, carvings and ornaments—cherubs, gargoyles, lanterns, signs of the Zodiac, roses and vines entwined—startle the eye from where they were long ago carved over doors and around windows. Architects' names, long since buried beneath the layers of grime, once more show proudly on the buildings they created, an artistic resurrection.

Paris is by no means all of a piece yet. Though considerably more than two thousand buildings have already been refurbished, for every one sporting a new face, two of its neighbors still thrust forward their grimy countenances. This is a dappled, spotty, harlequined Paris, not any longer the old city, but not yet the new one either.

Because of traditionalist opposition, the cleaners have to date withheld their hand from many of the more famous landmarks, such as the Arc de Triomphe, the Pantheon, and the Cathedral of Notre Dame. These remain grey with their age, and over them, particularly over Notre Dame, the traditionalists will surely fight their bitterest battle. And there is some truth to the charge that neo-classical buildings may be improved by such cleaning, but that the Gothic landmarks—such as Notre Dame—will be desecrated.

A NEW archeology is also scrubbing the grey of centuries from the city's stones and monuments. A newly gilded Jeanne d'Arc and her horse prance bright on the Place des Pyramides. At the end of the Champs Elysées, the Place de la Concorde shines with a new grandeur, and the three thousand-year-old Egyptian obelisk from the Temple of Luxor, which rears up from the center of the Place, has its one hundred and fifty tons brightened too, another reminder that this is

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new, yet older Paris being unearthed. The Palais-Bourbon is resplendent, as is the Hotel Crillon and the Chamber of Deputies, only recently emerged from behind its pipe-stem *nettoyage* scaffolding. The Louvre is only partly scrubbed, but the sides which are shine in comparison to the unscrubbed rear, still lampblacked by time. The contrast provides the best argument for those who favor the clean-up campaign. And the Madeleine's gleaming facades and vaulting Corinthian columns are an ivory reminder—even with the Christian statues in its niches—of its architectural forebears among the Greek temples.

Even parts of the Metro, the Paris subway, have been repainted or glass-bricked, and the worn, forbidding (and uncomfortable) brown benches replaced by blond molded plywood seats and orange plastic ones (equally uncomfortable).

Paris is also getting its new face from a building boom which rivals or exceeds the one in Manhattan. New, modern, light-colored buildings, chiefly apartment houses, have sprung up, structures of steel and chrome and glass, with severe straight lines and modern balconies, in stark contrast to their older, softer, and rounded nineteenth-century neighbors. Everywhere, French Erector-set-like cranes and scaffoldings skeleton the skyline, and pneumatic drills and hammers, and small (by American standards) bulldozers and tractors push and pull, raise and lower, dig and fill in. Everywhere, too, streets are dug up, causing traffic jams and bad tempers—some of monumental proportions—in avenues already overcrowded with vehicles during peak hours.

Some of the old color of Paris *is* passing, and many besides the traditionalists will rue its going. There are far fewer kiosks, with their gay posters and onion-shaped domes, and many more billboards. The street-corner *pissoirs* have been sharply reduced in number, and although a few are left, one must hunt for them. And many of the old, and sometimes fashionable, cafes have disappeared as the rising cost of real estate and the quickened pace of French life have overtaken them and their patrons.

Even for the most traditional, there are advantages to the new lineaments of Paris. Perhaps the old, black *Defense d'afficher* warnings—"It is forbidden to post signs according to the law of 29 July, 1881"—will stop being a familiar disfigurement of the sides of buildings. Mottoes still chalked, inked and painted on walls which read, "OAS-Jeune France, OAS-Nazis, Algérie-Française, CNR-Assassins, De Gaulle-Mendes," and others, unprintable things about both sides and their leading personalities, should surely disappear in the *nettoyage*, and perhaps, in departing, take with them some of the scars of that bitter conflict which raged among Frenchmen on the question of Algeria.

This new washing-down of Parisian buildings is apparently General de Gaulle's architectural accompaniment to his political remodeling of France in his Fifth Republic, another, cultural way of turning France's face back toward the distant past and toward the future, *but away from the recent past*. It is a way of unearthing and bringing to French and foreign eyes alike the picture of France's former grandeur, one way, so to speak, of removing from France's escutcheon the stains of defeats, indignities and dishonors suffered by the Third and Fourth Republics. At the same time this "architectural striking force" is also another way of restoring to France the sense of future power and greatness, a method of insuring that, as de Gaulle said in his September 21st speech on the subject of his successor to the Presidency, "France shall live, shall progress and . . . its future be assured."

THE STAGE

Mistuh Williams, He Dead

SITTING among the ashes of Tennessee Williams' latest play, his erstwhile defender, the veteran sufferer who has stayed with him through the entire cycle of extinctions and resurrections, now thinks: this time it's finished, he has had it and I have had it too. There is no point looking for another rebirth, because whatever it is that gives back to consumed birds their wings, plumage and beating hearts is not going to listen to another word.

Why, rather than be banal and hysterical and absurd, doesn't he keep quiet? Why doesn't he simply stop writing, stay absolutely unproductive for a long time in Key West, or the South of Spain, or the corner of any bar, and just think? We know this is what he has been trying to do, but how is it possible in the midst of that self-created din, the clatter of the somersaults he keeps turning in front of us, like a spoiled child who needs to have his existence continually justified, indeed ascertained, by our glances, which show admiration, fear, disgust and troubled love.

How many plays in how few years? How terrifying it must be to feel that a season cannot pass, as for that child an evening cannot, without your name being on clucking tongues and your reflection in the encircling eyes. But Williams seems unable to let go; he is wedded to his fear and compulsion, which are bringing about his creative suicide because they are the very things that make a silent, fertile period in the desert, his possible salvation, so unthinkable. Unlike D. H. Lawrence, one of the sources of his sensibility, Williams cannot "shed his sicknesses in his books," because to write them has become a malady itself.

"The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore" is not

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diseased in the way that certain detractors of Williams find the bulk of his work to be. If anything, it is in subject the "healthiest" play he has written, which establishes once again how unimportant subject in art really is. For this thrust into allegory, which speaks of renunciation and transcendence and a way of the spirit, represents so nearly complete a collapse of Williams' imaginative powers, such a massive failure of rhetoric and structure, impulse and control, that next to it a "black" play like "Suddenly Last Summer" or "Orpheus Descending" seems robust and encouraging simply because of the relative victory of the shaping imagination; it is form, in other words, that most directly answers questions of health in art.

Williams has followed "The Night of the Iguana," last year's surprising emergence from the pit of "Period of Adjustment" and "Sweet Bird of Youth," with another, and ostensibly more radical movement of quest: for a way out of the impasse created by a belief in the redemptive nature of sexual efficacy—or, more broadly, physical love—that is in absolute conflict with a foreboding that the flesh cannot yield up deliverance. The moralist, hidden or inverted in the bulk of the Williams canon, is in these two plays increasingly on stage.

Like its predecessor, "Milk Train" is situated outside the American South, but its central figure, an aging, wealthy ex-Follies queen, is a Southerner. That provides Williams with a conduit to his past and results in nearly all the energetic and effective dialogue the play possesses. "Old swamp bitches from Georgia don't go in for hand-kissing," is certainly to be preferred, both as philosophy and as rhetoric, to "life is all memory, except for each passing moment." But the latter is the sort of thing we encounter over and over in this deeply embarrassing work.

The woman, Flora Goforth, whose name is only one of the many symbolic elements that rattle around in "Milk Train," has rented a summer villa on the Italian *Costa Divina* below Naples, where she is dictating her memoirs—five husbands who "looked like apes," one who looked like an ostrich, countless lovers, a long blaze of fame and flamboyance—and preparing, or rather refusing to prepare, to die.

The death is the story, and Williams is, typically, at pains to let us know, in a preposterous program note which assures us of the "universality" of his theme, that it is *our* death he is talking about, the perennial pain and fear which surround the thought of dying. For the woman of his play, the knowledge that she is soon to die, of tuberculosis it seems, is a goad to a furious repudiation which takes the form of a determination to take another lover, to hold death off by throwing the body's special and inconsolable claims in front of it.

The chance comes when a handsome young man, a poet and maker of mobiles with a reputation as a gigolo, arrives at the villa in search, he announces, of someon to be useful to. For he is a *soi-disant* healer, who ha learned from a Hindu mystic certain central truth bearing on the peace of renunciation and acceptanc of mortality. He and Williams are a little confused though; the old Adam breaks through, in the bronze legs under the shorts he wears, and in his remark tha "devils can be driven out of the heart by the touch o a hand on a hand or a mouth on a mouth."

The confusion spreads while the symbolism prolifer ates. The young man, who is named Christopher, a though *Zenopher* would be more appropriate, i tempted towards the old beauty's bedroom, but refuse while milk (for innocence) dribbles down his chin, an after she has told him a harrowing story about th death of one of her husbands, who murmured "th terror! the terror!" (out of *Heart of Darkness*) an fouled his bed, "the bed where I gave him my body. Chris, you see, is holding out for her surrender to hi spiritual powers (never specified beyond that hand o mouth touch) and in the end she of course submit throwing pride, passion and credibility to the wings.

"Iguana" got by, narrowly against its tendencies t self-debasement, because its symbolism was sparser an more controlled, because its central proposition—tha there is a need for courage and for the acceptance o mortal frailty in ourselves and others—was sustaine by an adequate structure and a frequently distinguishe rhetoric, and because its characters had the dramati existence proper to their intellectual and imaginativ intentions. But "Milk Train" has almost no structur (originally a one-acter, it is agonizingly over-extended) no decisive language beyond the most pretentious ("w all live in houses on fire" is a fair example) and n characters with a greater degree of existence than lon residence in Williams' hot-house can confer on then

The woman does have a certain palpability, especia ly in her bitchy moments, and is played by Hermion Baddeley for all the role is worth, though with a ten dency to lapse into the Cockney speech and mannerism with which we associate this English actress. But Pau Roebling, a handsome figurine, reduces the young ma beneath even the incredibly low level of realizatio Williams places him on; he is a paler Val, a less plaus ble Chance Wayne, a vastly inferior Hannah Jelkes (fo they have the same function) from "Iguana." And Mi dred Dunnock, while as competent as ever, has bee handed a part that bears no relevance to the play bu that of an extra symbol: a *really* depraved woman, i contrast to our redeemable heroine.

About Herbert Machiz's direction I have nothing t say, since the problem is that there is nothing to direc About Williams, one more thing. Perhaps it is still to soon to write him off, since no creative death is i remediable. Yet how often can the phoenix rise, an must there not be some source of grace intact, som

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channel of air kept open for the bird to be summoned up into? In using the stage not to solve his dilemmas esthetically but to exhibit them in their inchoate form, he is bringing about the permanent death of his art, intruding himself into the space it should occupy and thus drawing the sickness it is meant to heal more airlessly and irrevocably around him. (*At the Morosco*)

RICHARD GILMAN

THE SCREEN

Can Spring Be Far Behind?

AFTER 1962's cinema year closed with such a bang ("Sundays and Cybèle," "David and Lisa," "Lawrence" and "Freud") 1963's whimpering start seems all the more depressing. The American films so far this year haven't been very startling. And now three new imports on our screens are no more impressive.

Most disappointing is the Japanese movie, perhaps because we expect so much from the great director, Akira Kurosawa, whose "Rashomon," "Ikiru," "Seven Samurai," "Throne of Blood" ("Macbeth") and other films displayed an artistry and depth that made viewers appreciate his work. "The Bad Sleep Well," for which Kurosawa served as co-producer and co-writer, as well as director, tells a complicated story of bribery, corruption, and revenge in high places. The plot's material is familiar enough. In fact, we've seen it handled before in American and German films. But Kurosawa chooses to reveal his themes bit by bit, as in a mystery thriller. And the story moves so slowly and gets so involved that the viewer becomes impatient with it long before it even begins to reach a conclusion.

Many scenes in "The Bad Sleep Well" show the fine hand of director Kurosawa, and in these the good cast carry on well, especially Masayuki Mori as the evil president of a corporation; Kyoko Kakawa as his pretty, crippled daughter; Toshiro Mifune as his vengeance-seeking son-in-law. In spite of occasional lively episodes, the film as a whole is static; and it is quite talky—which makes it seem even more static to the viewer kept busy reading subtitles. I doubt if the corruption-and-vengeance theme is worth such lengthy telling. And, then again, it could be that "The Bad Sleep Well" doesn't travel well.

ALSO disappointing is the import from England, mainly because of its outstanding cast, including three Oscar winners, from whom we expect more. No doubt the main faults of "Term of Trial" are due to director-writer Peter Grenville. I didn't read the James Barlow novel on which Grenville based his script, but it must be a pretty grim affair, considering the woebegone movie made from it. The story centers on a schoolmaster (Laurence Olivier) who wants, above all else to be a good teacher. Heaven knows he tries hard enough, but everything and everyone, including himself, seem to work against his good intentions, especially the grubby kids and their mean parents in this poor neighborhood of an English industrial town. It's no wonder the teacher drinks: after battling with the brats all day, he comes home to a sloppy, nagging wife (Simone Signoret), a former barmaid, who loves him but never lets him forget that they have no friends, that he's always being taken advantage of, that he was imprisoned (as a conscientious objector) during the war.

Between drinks, the teacher never stops trying—and becomes the prey of all comers: a competitive teacher (Roland Culver), a juvenile-delinquent-type bully (Terence Stamp, who doesn't look or behave at all as he did in "Billy Budd"), an attractive young girl (expertly played by Sarah Miles) who is being given special tutoring by Olivier and who misunderstands his kindness and interest. When she accuses him of making indecent advances, he is dragged into court. But in spite of an eloquent defense by his lawyer (Hugh Griffith), he is at first found guilty. It is then that Olivier finally speaks up: "You are condemning me for resisting the girl." And because his wife condemns him for the same reason, he tells her the lie that is entirely out of keeping with his character.

Although James Woolf has given this film a good production with actors, sets and photography far better than the plot deserves, the picture is annoying on many counts: its slow direction, its unrelieved emphasis on woe, its repetition of examples to show how long-suffering is this teacher, and the teacher himself, who behaves like something left over from *If Winter Comes* and deserves most of what he gets—except for the ironic finale. No matter how you slice it, "Term of Trial" is little more than a high-class soap opera.

PERHAPS the *nouvelle vague* is washed up, so we shouldn't expect too much from the bright young French directors. The latest example, called "Playtime," was directed by François Moreuil. Since it is based on a story by Françoise Sagan, whose promise is all promise, we shouldn't expect anything. Also about a schoolgirl who gets a crush on an older man, "Playtime" follows this girl (Jean Seberg) on her affair with the artist (Christian Marquand) who's living next door to the school with a woman his age (Françoise Prevost) who's keeping him. Sex, according to this movie, seems to have nothing to do with love; it is more like exercises that one takes during the course of a day. And the film itself is like an exercise in film-making, a careless exercise tossed off one day in between other more important events. It might have been called "Plaything."

PHILIP T. HARTUNG

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Of Note

An Appeal to Conscience

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE on Religion and Race was held in Chicago from Jan. 14 to 17. Convened by the social action departments of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the National Council of Churches and the Synagogue Council of America, it was attended by eight hundred delegates representing more than seventy religious denominations and organizations. At the close of the meetings the Conference unanimously approved "An Appeal to the Conscience of the American People," which is presented here in full:

We have met as members of the great Jewish and Christian faiths held by the majority of the American people, to counsel together concerning the tragic fact of racial prejudice, discrimination and segregation in our society. Coming as we do out of various religious backgrounds, each of us has more to say than can be said here. But this statement is what we as religious people are moved to say together.

I.

Racism is our most serious domestic evil. We must eradicate it with all diligence and speed. For this purpose we appeal to the consciences of the American people.

This evil has deep roots; it will not be easily eradicated. While the Declaration of Independence did declare "that all men are created equal" and "are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights," slavery was permitted for almost a century. Even after the Emancipation Proclamation, compulsory racial segregation and its degrading badge of racial inequality received judicial sanction until our own time.

We rejoice in such recent evidences of greater wisdom and courage in our national life as the Supreme Court decisions against segregation and the heroic, nonviolent protests of thousands of Americans. However, we mourn the fact that patterns of segregation remain entrenched everywhere—North and South, East and West. The spirit and the letter of our laws are mocked and violated.

Our primary concern is for the laws of God. We Americans of all religious faiths have been slow to recognize that racial discrimination and segregation are an insult to God, the Giver of human dignity and human rights. Even worse, we all have participated in perpetuating racial discrimination and segregation in civil, political, industrial, social, and private life. And worse still, in our houses of worship, our religious schools, hospitals, welfare institutions, and fraternal organizations we have often failed our own religious commitments. With few exceptions we have evaded the mandates and rejected the promises of the faiths we represent.

We repent our failures and ask the forgiveness of God. We ask also the forgiveness of our brothers, whose rights we have ignored and whose dignity we have offended. We call for a renewed religious conscience on this basically moral evil.

II.

Our appeal to the American people is this:

Seek a reign of justice in which voting rights and equal protection of the law will everywhere be enjoyed public facilities and private ones serving a public purpose will be accessible to all; equal education and cultural opportunities, hiring and promotion, medical and hospital care, open occupancy in housing will be available to all.

Seek a reign of love in which the wounds of past injustices will not be used as excuses for new ones racial barriers will be eliminated; the stranger will be sought and welcomed; any man will be received a brother—his rights, your rights; his pain, your pain; his prison, your prison.

Seek a reign of courage in which the people of God will make their faith their binding commitment; in which men willingly suffer for justice and love; in which churches and synagogues lead, not follow.

Seek a reign of prayer in which God is praised and worshiped as the Lord of the universe, before Whom all racial idols fall, Who makes us one family and to Whom we are all responsible.

In making this appeal we affirm our common religious commitment to the essential dignity and equality of all men under God. We dedicate ourselves to work together to make this commitment a vital factor in our total life.

We call upon all the American people to work, to pray and to act courageously in the cause of human equality and dignity while there is still time, to eliminate racism permanently and decisively, to seize the historic opportunity the Lord has given us for healing an ancient rupture in the human family, to do this for the glory of God.

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Anthony Powell: Vision and Detachment

The Kindly Ones. By Anthony Powell. Little, Brown. $4.

by Richard McLaughlin

ENGLISH novelist Anthony Powell may not be exactly a *Menschenkenner*—how could he be with the invading social sciences making it practically impossible nowadays for a writer to hold himself up as a humanity expert?—yet his ambitiously-scaled series of novels, *The Music of Time,* reveal him to have the largeness of vision and ironic detachment usually associated with the best of the English nineteenth century novelists.

But make no mistake about that: Powell is strictly a social chronicler of the manners and morals of the twentieth century scene. Nor does one have to be necessarily soaked in the mores of English social life to appreciate the deft organization behind his intricate and polished work of fiction.

"My aim," he says, talking about the plan of his vast many-volumed project, "is to present social realities as realistic as they are and not as they are imagined." This, I suppose, can be said of his fellow countryman, C. P. Snow, too. For Snow is also engaged in an enormous literary project and shows in his work a keen interest in the English social structure. But, frankly, of the two, I find Powell's work subtler and more artistically satisfying. While Snow knows how to turn out a well-plotted tale, his ideas are frequently banal. Indeed, he is sometimes guilty of *longueurs* that are never found in any of Powell's novels.

Rivaling Evelyn Waugh for wit and mimicry, but not nearly as choleric as Waugh, Powell arrives at his best comic effects by what V. S. Pritchett has called "under-playing the absurd." His latest novel, *The Kindly Ones,* sixth installment in a series which promises to run to at least ten volumes, testifies to Powell's continued skill at conveying how time keeps people hopping to a melody they often find beyond their control. Or as Nick Jenkins, meeting the husband of an ex-mistress, says: "This was yet another example of the tricks that Time can play within its folds, tricks that emphasize the insecurity of those who trust themselves over much to that treacherous concept. I suddenly found what I had regarded as immutable—the not entirely unsublime past—roughly reshaped by the rude hands of Duport."

The book opens with a flashback to the summer of 1914, a time prior to events described in the first installment, *A Question of Upbringing,* when Nick Jenkins successfully recalls his Eton days. Nick now introduces us to a whole new collection of people, some of whom not only figured importantly in the last months of his childhood but are to reappear in his later life. Among these highly individual types are Albert, the family cook, who, plagued by matrimonial-minded women, levels all his distrust of the female sex at the suffragettes of the day; and Dr. Trelawney, a somewhat unsavory high priest of a dubious mystic cult.

The climax of this pre-First World War section comes with the fearful news of the assassination at Sarajevo. But the stage has already been set for hysteria and strife by the neurotic behavior of Billson, the Jenkinses' maid. Driven frantic by Albert's indifference to her, she breaks up a family dinner party by appearing in the nude. And it is General Conyers, an old friend from the earlier volumes, who adroitly moves into action and puts a prompt end to a startling situation.

Nick Jenkins, reflecting on the sudden, even brutal, way childhood was brought to a close for him, is inclined to look back on it all with a rueful eye. "Albert's shutters may have kept out the suffragettes: they did not effectively exclude the Furies."

The current installment finishes on a somewhat more sober note than the previous ones. Despite the countless sharply etched scenes mirroring the antics of London's "smart" society and its seedy Bohemian fringes, the closing sections dominate the mood of the book. They deal with the Munich period and take us right up to the eve of World War II, when "a tense, infinitely uneasy over-all stagnation imposed itself upon an equally uncomfortable, equally febrile, over-all activity. Everyone was on the move."

For the Furies are back again after the holocaust of 1914, and Nick is about to enter the army. It is 1939 and the world is moving quickly toward disaster. "The Kindly Ones" (the name the Greeks gave to the Furies in hopes of appeasing their wrath) prove not only to be carriers of war, but manage to spread chaos and torment among several of Nick's old and more recent friends. Moreland, the composer, and his actress wife, Matilda, are faced with marital troubles; while Templar bears Time's all too mutable stamp and has lost his "jolly good fellow" spirits, and bumptious Widmerpool makes his reappearance, cutting a more absurd figure than ever, in uniform, playing the "Happy Warrior."

Nick Jenkins, the narrator-protagonist of this superb multi-faceted re-creation of English upper crust society and Bohemia between the wars, could easily be described as the man in the wings. For, in spite of his involvement with an ever-widening circle of eccentric cronies and social hangers-on, he still appears to be watching everything from a discreetly removed observation post. In fact, Nick Jenkins might almost be the author himself, as Powell, too, is of the Establishment and has, like his hero, been both a writer of film scenarios and literary editor.

Some readers are sure to raise the objection, if they haven't already, that Powell is much too cerebral, that passion plays little or no part in his fiction. This is doubtlessly true. And his employment of the movie camera's studied, slow-motion technique in handling every incident hardly alters this impression. Among his coterie, however, he is thought to be an artist quite incapable of erring.

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Karl Barth's Theological Quest

Evangelical Theology: An Introduction. By Karl Barth. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. $4.
Karl Barth on God. By Sebastian A. Matczak. St. Paul Publications. $5.75.

by Daniel J. O'Hanlon

JUST AS Harnack's eminently readable *What is Christianity?* provided the first half of the century with a mirror of Protestant theology at the century's start, so Barth's *Evangelical Theology: an Introduction,* originally a valedictory course of seventeen lectures at Basel, may become for readers of the second half of the century a classic account of the present state of Protestant theology. Not that Barth speaks for all of contemporary Protestantism. Who does? But more than any other single figure, he has affected the course of its theology in our time.

There is special importance, then, in a book in which, as he tells us, "I wanted to render a short account to myself and my contemporaries of what, up to now, I have basically sought, learned, and represented from among all the paths and detours in the field of evangelical theology during my five years as a student, twelve years as a preacher, and subsequent forty years as a professor."

The lectures are cast in the symphonic form of four movements, each of them woven about four themes, the last of which always resolves the movement into a victorious major, though the echoes of minors and dissonances never entirely disappear. A preliminary lecture sets the tone of the whole book with a brief description of evangelical theology. Because it submits itself totally to the God who proclaims Himself in the Gospel, evangelical theology is modest and claims nothing of its own. Being independent of all else but the Word of God, it is a *free* science. Since it concerns itself with God acting in history, it is continually put on trial by God's free and dynamic action. Nevertheless, because it has as its object the God of the Gospel, who is man's God as father, brother and friend, because it is concerned with Immanuel, God with us, it can be nothing else but a most thankful and happy science.

The four lectures of Part I define the place of evangelical theology, which is hovering in mid-air, in the freely moved and moving air of the Spirit. God's living Word, manifested in the history of Israel and culminating in the history of Jesus Christ, attested to by the prophets and apostles as primary witnesses and the Christian community as secondary witnesses is not supported by what is usually considered sound evidence, but only by the Holy *Spirit.*

The second part proceeds *andante cantabile* in concentric circles beginning with wonder, moving deeper than mere admiration to active concern, then joyous commitment, realizing that the active center out of which wonder, concern, and commitment radiate is the inexplicable (though describable) event of faith.

In Part III the mood darkens, as Barth considers the threats to theology. In the first lecture of this quartet he declares solitude to be the inescapable fate of the theologian and of theology itself. Here Barth's basic difference with Tillich is unambiguously stated; he refuses to countenance a philosophical theology or a theological philosophy. Theology must renounce the idea of such syntheses as pure fantasy. Furthermore, the theologian can never escape the threat of doubt, even in its most pernicious form, yet must never despair. Barth calls the third and worst threat temptation, the threat which comes from God Himself.

Here Barth brings into play the earlier dialectic which earned his work the name of crisis theology; the theologian can only have God *for* himself when he has Him continually *against* himself. God's *No* manifests the human, sinful, imperfect and corrupt nature of even the best theology. But the *Yes* is there too, hidden beneath the coarse husk of the *No.* In the Cross is salvation. "If we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him."

The last part deals with theological work, which can be performed only in the act of prayer, since the object of theological work is not some *thing* but some *one,* who must be listened to afresh every day. Lest prayer be empty, it must be accompanied by study, and both study and prayer must be put at the service of the Christian community in love.

In the foreword, Barth expresses

On Acquiring a Cistercian Breviary

(For Father M. Louis, O.C.S.O.)

Long cloistered these old volumes that my hands
profane. Rubbed spines spell golden seasons. *Pax*
intrantibus! How many hidden men
dipped honeycomb from hence and Samson-thewed
robustly strove till sepulture beside
the abbey church! Each has his sombre cross
of naked iron with laconic plaque,
sacerdos and *conversus* leveled quite,
Dom James whose tassel was abbatical
and bearded Frater Hyacinth who baked.
And will they rise triumphantly in choir
all faults expunged? These rubricated leaves
were thumbed by novices who now lie here.
But flowery tropes the prophecy and pledge,
a travesty on truth which holds no hope
for them? If so, how came they to be strong,
these silent monks? May desert rocks fill men
with food or venom work their cure? Embrace
such paradox who can. These books I'll have.

JOHN BEECHER

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the hope that his American readers may have discovered that he is not the "gloomy theological gladiator and fire-eater" whom Americans have imagined him to be "from the times of my early commentary on *Romans* and the angry 'No!' to Brunner." And indeed, the earlier Beethovian violence has yielded to a Mozartian humor and gentleness. *Evangelical Theology* is lightened and mellowed with the puckish humor and fatherly affection which so charmed those who had the privilege of hearing Barth's lectures in America.

Father Matczak's study, although careful and well-documented, has all the limitations of an apologetic work which sets out to show where the adversary is wrong. By concentrating on Barth's disparagement of man's power to know God by human reason (and by neglecting the growing emphasis of the later Barth on God as Immanuel, God with us, man's God), he concludes that his certitude of faith results logically in complete relativism and skepticism. He dwells at length on Barth's doctrine of the abyss between God and man and finds Barth and the first Vatican Council in clear opposition. This negative approach and these harsh conclusions are very different from those of Küng and von Balthasar, to name only two eminent Catholic students of Barth's theology.

It is true that in raising the issue of the place of philosophy and natural reason in theology, Father Matczak has put his finger on the weakest part of Barth's system, the part he defended with least success in the public discussions which accompanied the Chicago lectures last April. At the same time, Catholic theologians might spend their time more usefully learning from Barth's massive positive contribution to Christian theology.

Catholic theology asserts that faith is a free gift which no amount of human reasoning can reach, and that the Word of God to which man responds in faith is the primary and decisive norm of theology. But, perhaps as a hangover from the rationalism of the last century, perhaps because the Catholic theologian studies philosophy at length before he begins theology, he is exposed to the danger of giving a rationalistic interpretation to the oft-repeated "faith is reasonable" and making much of theology a mere re-run of his philosophy course, ornamented this time with appropriate texts from Scripture. Catholic theology stands to gain more by letting Barth save it from temptations such as these than by producing book-length anti-Barthian apologetics.

A Novel of Change

A Gap in the Wall. By Gabrielle Estivals. Knopf. $4.50.

by Jean Holzhauer

GABRIELLE Estivals' first novel won the *Prix de Fraternité* in 1957. Her second is a story of social change: Algeria's quest for independence and a parallel struggle by a girl named Zoubeïda within the framework of her high-born and wealthy Arab family.

Zoubeïda's father is sufficiently enlightened to send his daughter to the French lycée, against the wishes of her domineering elder brother. Youssef is himself caught in the clashes of mixed educational traditions. His is the classic position that this is permissible, even necessary, for men but not for women. While busily engaged in breaking out of his culture, he is determined that his sister remain safely inside.

Zoubeïda, however, has been face to face with her mother's silken, sequestered existence. At 15, she is well past the ignorance and superstition that nearly cost the mother's life in childbirth, and the vista of years spent embroidering in perfumed, dusky rooms is an intolerable one. Unreasonably restricted, she needs and finds unreasonable means of escape, including a terrifying term in a mental hospital. By the end of the book she has Youssef's promise to reconsider her case—for what it may be worth.

Mme. Estivals is director of a girls' school in eastern Algeria, where she has known many Zoubeïdas; doubtless she also knows whereof she speaks. Her picture of what goes on

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in a Muslim household, however, unfortunately reproduces what went on in Victorian Wimpole Street, minus unusual gifts in the heroine and, of course, minus Browning.

Shirley Anne Grau is reported to have said of *A Gap in the Wall,* "I am not sure why the book is so appealing. It may be the exotic scene. I've always wondered what sort of life went on in a Muslim household, and Mme. Estivals certainly gives you a detailed picture of that." She does indeed, but she offers little else of permanent interest.

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The Critical Art of Frank Kermode

Puzzles and Epiphanies. By Frank Kermode. Chilmark Press. $4.95.

by Hilton Kramer

READERS of the British weeklies and monthlies will already be familiar with Professor Kermode as one of the best literary critics writing in English today. The articles and reviews that flow from his pen in a steady and copious stream—always well-informed, clearly stated, and formidably intelligent—take up by turn the latest books of the most interesting living writers and the new volumes of biography, criticism, and scholarship which, in Professor Kermode's hands at least, make a special claim of relevance to immediate literary issues. His writing thus brings together in a single focus the worlds of scholarship and letters, of critical theory and current literary practice, in a way that remains fairly rare despite all the recent talk about ours being an age of criticism.

It would be difficult to come up with the name of a critic on this side of the Atlantic who matches Professor Kermode's unusual combination of qualities: a vast and easily carried literary erudition; a sympathetic and articulate enthusiasm for a wide variety of living writers; a vivid sense of the relations that obtain between morals and aesthetics in a work of art; and a willingness to address himself unremittingly, week after week, to new books and ideas without relaxing a high standard of artistic excellence. We have not had anything quite like this valuable conjunction of literary and academic interests in this country since the days when Professor Morton D. Zabel was contributing regular articles and reviews to *The Nation* and other journals.

Puzzles and Epiphanies is a collection of Professor Kermode's pieces from the years 1958-61. (The book, incidentally, is a riot of typographical errors, and appears never to have been proofread at all.) It opens with a lengthy essay entitled "Poet and Dancer before Diaghilev," a highly original piece of research which is at the same time a remarkable exposition of the concrete aesthetic experience that lay behind the Symbolists' celebration of the dance as the quintessential image embodying their views on art and reality. This essay has an importance far beyond what its title or this brief description might suggest; no one with a serious interest in modern poetry, painting or the theatre can afford to ignore it.

Dealing in some detail with the European career of the American dancer Loïe Fuller and more briefly with other dancers and performers of the *fin de siècle,* the essay traces out the effect of their stylistic innovations on the minds of Mallarmé Yeats, Valéry, Debussy, Rodin, Gordon Craig, Arthur Symons, and many other figures of the time, and establishes a direct link between the ideas of these dancers, on the one hand, and the doctrine of aesthetic impersonality in Eliot and Hulme and the concept of the ideogram in Pound, on the other. Professor Kermode's investigations illuminate with great subtlety the transition from Romantic and Symbolist aesthetics in the nineteenth century to the more abstract styles of the twentieth. His essay is certain to remain a key document in the study of the turn-of-the century avant-garde sensibility.

The essay is not, however, completely characteristic of this collection as a whole, which is largely concerned with contemporary pros writers and those older writers-Joyce, Valéry, Forster, Musil—who are firmly established in the moder canon. ("Poet and Dancer befor Diaghilev" is, in fact, a kind of epilogue to the author's earlier book *Romantic Image.*) A number of the most compelling books of our time are here given very searching treatment. *Doctor Zhivago, The Catcher in the Rye, The Leopard,* and *The Alexandria Quartet*; the novels of Samuel Beckett and William Golding; the diverse writings of Henry Miller, John Betjeman, Vladimir Nabokov, David Jones, Graham Greene, Allen Tate, Christopher Isherwood, C. P. Snow, and Angus Wilson; the critical works of Edmund Wilson, Mario Praz, and

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Northrop Frye—these and a host of other subjects are explored, sometimes briefly and sometimes at length, with a steadiness of vision that is altogether exceptional.

Professor Kermode is, then, a most sophisticated and responsible critic, writer who always does his homework and is not easily put off by the difficult, the obscure, or the outrageous. His various comments on the Symbolist mode of literature, continuing preoccupation which turns up sooner or later in nearly everything he writes, are surely the clearest and most useful—to readers not to writers—since *Axel's Castle*, book which he greatly esteems. He is himself capable of some virtuoso turns of subtler critical instruments (e.g., his analysis of the syntax and symbolism of the opening sentence in *A Passage to India*), but he rarely sets up as a specialist critic—the critic whose "system," or mode of analysis, is clearly of more interest than the mere object of analysis—of the sort which lately flourished with such deadening effect in this country. Professor Kermode has evidently been a keen student of these specialist critics, but his own writings are addressed to that legendary, indispensable creature who had fallen for so long on hard times: the common reader. One of the incidental pleasures of *Puzzles and Epiphanies* is the realization it brings of just how sophisticated this common reader may now be assumed to be.

Is there something missing from all this? I think so. Professor Kermode writes from a privileged position, a kind of mental sanctuary which never requires him to choose one style over another, one mode of experience or imagination over another, one kind of life over another. He is extraordinarily sensitive to every nuance in the nervous texture of modern literature, but the texture of life is somehow never directly engaged. What one feels in these essays is not the raw nerve of individual experience as it encounters the crucial imaginative documents of its time, but something else: the probing intelligence of a very brilliant mind examining at its ease an interesting landscape it has not itself been compelled to traverse.

There is a lack of existential pressure in Professor Kermode's essays which identifies them, I think, as essentially academic in their loyalties, even though their academicism is far more sophisticated and up-to-date in its grasp of the contemporary world than the writings of many more obviously committed critics. One comes away from his work wiser about books, but not about life. For this reason I would not put him in a class with Edmund Wilson, V. S. Pritchett, or Alfred Kazin. But among the academics, Professor Kermode is in the front rank, and this book shows him at his best.

REVIEWERS

Richard McLaughlin is a Massachusetts newspaperman.

Father Daniel J. O'Hanlon, S.J., is a professor of theology at Alma College, California.

Jean Holzhauer has written for *The Critic*, *Today* and other publications.

Hilton Kramer, a frequent contributor, is art critic for *The Nation*.

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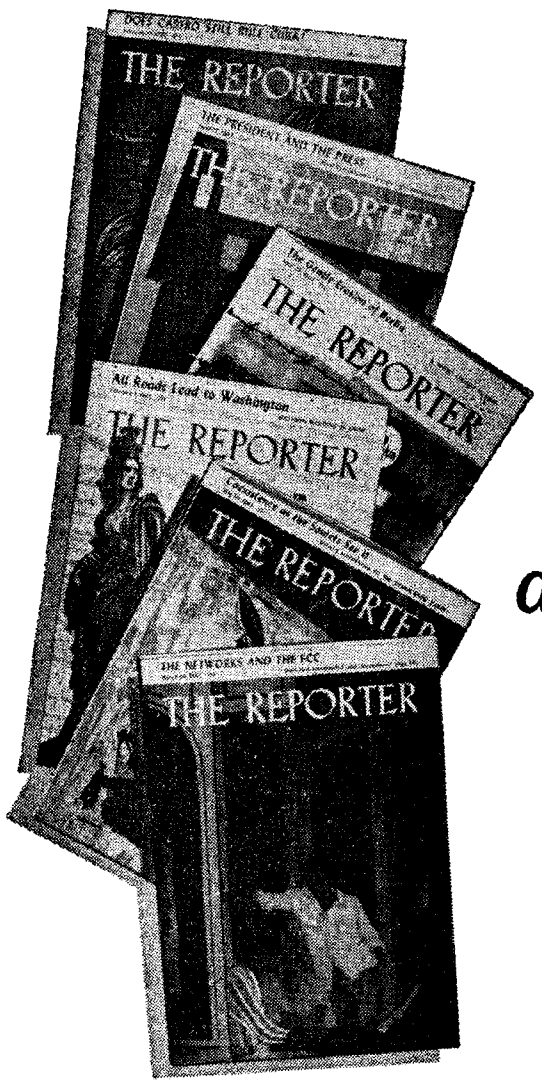

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